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ABSTRACT

Schools embody a "symbolic order" communicated through school rituals and social and symbolic relationships. Schools possess a moral vision, a system of values and norms that they wish to develop in students. This paper compares the symbolic order of two independent schools, one a traditional college preparatory school (preschool-grade 12), the other a less well known school, called a Waldorf school (nursery-grade 6). The focus was on the elementary grades, although attention also was given to the whole school program. Both schools are in a wealthy, middle-sized Southeastern community with a population of 100,000. The study utilized observations, interviews, tape recordings, videotaping lessons and events, and the study of curricular and other documents. Lessons, rituals, festivals, ceremonies, sporting events, parent and faculty meetings, open days, and other events were repeatedly observed, documented, and analyzed. In the discussion and comparison of each school, three areas of school life were considered: (1) organization of the school day and activities; (2) pedagogy or the teaching-learning process; and (3) the curriculum. The study revealed areas of school life that differed significantly between the schools. Each school's symbolic order embodied quite different conceptions of the world, relations to others, and the individual. Waldorf school's symbolism about the world sends a message of democratic, egalitarian values in an organic, interdependent world: knowledge is taught in wholes not parts, and through storytelling not abstractions. College Prep's symbolism conveys instead the school's belief in progress and a hierarchical conception of the world. Contains 46 references. (DB)

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The Symbolic Order of School: Waldorf and College Prep

An individual paper presented to the AERA annual meeting
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The Symbolic Order of School: Waldorf and College Prep[1]

Schools embody a *symbolic order* communicated through school rituals, social and symbolic relationships. That is to say, schools have a moral vision, a system of values and norms that they want students to develop. This paper compares the symbolic order of two independent schools, with a focus on the symbolic order as communicated by teachers.[2] Questions that motivated this study included: What socializing do schools do in order to bring about in students certain ways of perceiving the world and acting within it? What is it that schools stand for? What are the ideas and values that constitute a school culture? How do school cultures differ? How do schools communicate their cultures? Why is it, for example, that the tradition of Thanksgiving is celebrated in different ways.

At one school at Thanksgiving students sit in rows, participating in a purportedly nonsectarian, yet Episcopal inspired, chapel service. A small child comes forward to light the candles on the altar. Flowers brighten the altar, with its white linen cloth, gold cross and candlesticks. The minister says, "The earth is our Lord's for he made it." The school response is: "Come let us worship him." In hymns and prayers God is thanked for His goodness and grace in providing for and protecting them. In the homily, thanksgiving is addressed from a perspective of facts about the origins of thanksgiving: when thanksgiving is, where the Pilgrims came from in the Mayflower, where England, America, Plymouth Rock and the Atlantic Ocean are located, how the Pilgrims and Indians lived and dressed. The benediction asks for "the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ" and the trinity to "be with us all evermore." At another school, students, teachers and parents stand in a circle on a hill surrounded by wilderness. They have lit a huge fire, using wood they have collected from the forest. Students make an offering by playing musical instruments, singing and reciting poetry. On their table a menora holds eight hand-made and decorated candles, and symbols of nature, a cotton plant, pumpkins, gourds and all-natural health food. At the conclusion of the ceremony they join in a communal thanksgiving supper.

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[1] I want to thank the Commonwealth Center for the Education of Teachers, University of Virginia, for its support of this research.

[2] See Kapferer 1982; Lesko 1990: 147.

Background

Clifford Geertz's (1973: 5) view of culture as "webs of significance" created by humans in a group informs this research. The symbolic order is viewed as a meaning system created through both verbal and nonverbal representation. It defines the participant's world, providing both a "model of" society, i.e., an idealised form or definition of the situation, and a "model for" society, i.e., routines or plans for action in the social world (Geertz 1965). Culture is seen as constituted of ideas, values or morals, cultural foci and themes that people have agreed upon as of central importance. This happens notwithstanding the plurality of societies. For example, in the U.S. the dialogue is about such things as "freedom and constraint, equality and difference, cooperation and competition, independence and conformity, sociability and individuality, Puritanism and free love, materialism and altruism, hard work and getting by, and achievement and failure" (Spindler and Spindler 1987: 151-156).

Recently, reform efforts have focused on the work that schools do in ensuring that the young will learn about such U.S. values, the "values, rituals, skills and modes of behavior" deemed to be "in the best interests of the group or the whole" (Goodlad *et al.* 1990: xii). For schools, this means two things: schools establish their own culture. They have their own authority structure, value laden curriculum, social relations, goals, rules of conduct, evaluation procedures, and so on. Schools are also involved in communicating ideas about society at large and one's proper relationship to others, and to the state. Ideas about truth, justice, liberty and morality are embedded in the very fabric of school life (Sirotnik 1990; Kapferer 1981). Some of this is intentional; some is unintentional. And, as Page (1990: 52) points out schools translate the wider culture in very different ways. They "render America lively or otherwise in the texts they construct."

Schools have come under attack for having neglected values socialization and the creation of a unified "public," e.g., Adler 1982; Wynne 1986; Hirsch 1987; Bloom 1987; Lesko 1990. Education has, it is argued, failed to instill a sense of shared traditions and community. Despite Bloom's pompousness and Hirsch's view of culture as a Eurocentric list of key people and events, they have highlighted the role schools can play in generating a "public".[3] Dewey (1966) had also warned against the separation of school and community in *Democracy and Education.* He argued that intellectual concerns and social morals were necessarily intertwined, the outcome being a socially concerned community. Given public schools' heterogeneous clientele, it is perhaps understandable

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[3] On the concept of the "public", see Greene 1990; Dewey 1954; Bellah 1985.

that their moral vision would be less clear and less focused than private schools.[4] However, since more than 12 percent of American school students are in private schools (independent or parochial), these schools provide a useful window on what values socialization might mean.

Moreover, researchers have, for many years (Durkheim 1956; Dreeben 1968) accepted as a given that schools socialize students into the values and norms of modern industrial society, without attending to the specifics of how schools differ in this regard. Hymes (1980) noted that we know very little about the types of schooling that exist. Functionalists, on the one hand, argue that schools teach the values that are required for society, and that they must do so if society is to survive. For example, in the U.S. necessary values are considered those of individualism, achievement, universalism, and specialization. Conflict theorists agree that schools work to support capitalism, but focus instead on how this is negative, i.e., all working class kids are sifted and sorted and socialized to obey authority, while the upper classes are socialized for power (Anyon 1989; Bowles and Gintis 1976). Other theorists, such as Ray McDermott (1978), show through their detailed ethnographic work that micro processes are essential for understanding schools. Ways of thinking and acting are built, deconstructed or maintained through daily activities, thought and discourse. This study is one small part of the work that is needed to learn about the variety of contemporary schools.

The Study

Two schools were studied over a complete school year (1989-90), with preliminary research involvement during the preceding year. One school was a traditional college preparatory school (preschool-grade 12), the other a less well known school, a Waldorf School[5] (nursery-grade 6). The focus was on the elementary grades, although attention was also given to the whole school programs. Both schools were in a wealthy, middle-sized, Southeastern community (population 100,000) which supported a wide range of private and public schools.[6]

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[4] Independent schools are differentiated from parochial schools by their independence from a church hierarchy.

[5] It is estimated that there are over 100 Waldorf schools in North America, and 400 schools worldwide in 27 countries, including Brazil, South Africa, Holland, Switzerland, Australia, New Zealand, Finland, England, North and South America, France and Germany (Armstrong 1988:44). Waldorf schooling was founded by Rudolf Steiner (1861-1925), a German scientist and educational visionary. The first school opened in Stuttgart, Germany, in 1919.

[6] Thirteen private and thirteen public schools at the elementary level.

Through observations, interviews, tape recording and videotaping lessons and events, and the study of curricular and other documents, I set out to study *in* two independent schools. Lessons, rituals, festivals, ceremonies, sporting events, parent and faculty meetings, open days, chapel (at College Prep) and the anthroposophical study group for parents and teachers (Waldorf School)[7] were repeatedly observed, documented and analysed. Triangulation of findings and member checking helped establish tentative ideas, which were then subject to further investigation. After many months of watching and questioning, views about the ideas, values and norms taught and legitimated in school began to form. They were then further tested against the ideas of those in the schools. The cycle was repeated until views became internally consistent. However, in drawing attention to the schools' symbolic orders, this is not to imply that plurality is non-existent, or that schools are an intact cultural whole, but rather to identify those areas where persistent and recognizable themes exist.

The study is interpretive, therefore the researcher's values and attitudes enter into the analysis and communication of findings. A methodological log proved useful in monitoring biases and recognizing value based assumptions.[8] As an example, private schools are, in my view, to be welcomed for providing choice and variety, although this has an inevitable and not always favorable impact on public schools (see Hirschman 1970). Public schools, on the other hand, have an historically important mission of providing free, secular education, although in today's society I see them as offering hope at the same time as facing a daunting task.[9] I also do not accept that public schools are only to be concerned with literacy, as some would have it. Yet, how can they attend to the moral dimensions of teaching when so many competing interest groups are involved?

The success of the project was to be measured by its detailed portrayal of schools from the inside, showing alternative ways of "doing school", and its usefulness in illustrating educational issues related to values socialization. As Jackson (1990: 8), who is also studying the moral life of schools, points out, the researcher has to learn to

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[7] Anthroposophy or spiritual science was a movement also created by Rudolf Steiner. Anthroposophy is a belief system that aims to create the conditions for cultural renewal through knowledge of the spiritual world. Connecting spiritual and intellectual worlds is considered essential for the development of human wisdom. Anthroposophical movements were first formed in Germany, then in England and other European countries; they are now well established in the United States.

[8] See Henry 1990 on "self-as-instrument".

[9] Feinberg (1990) addresses the multi-purpose and fragmented nature of public education in his discussion of competing moral visions for public schools.

look at schools as "environments whose particulars are literally infused with moral significance."

Findings

Through symbolism in the fabric of school life, e.g., academic, sporting, social or religious activities, schools state their purpose or mission and their ideals for students. A school shows itself as standing *for* certain values and principles and *anti-* others. In the Thanksgiving ceremony described earlier, for instance, distinctive school values are displayed. The first school, in its traditional chapel service, can be seen as embodying the values of academic achievement and individualism, tempered by a social concern to be enacted through religion. The other school proposes holism and naturalism, a spiritual closeness with nature, as its central message. These themes are consistent with other areas of school life that will now be examined.

In this paper I shall attend to the work that teachers do in socializing students into the prevailing school culture. However, this is only one part of the school's project. Administrators, parents, friends, students, community and government are all instrumental in promoting a symbolic order, even if this is not done purposefully. Communal messages are a joint accomplishment. Three areas of school life will be considered: (a) organization of the school day and school activities, (b) pedagogy or the teaching-learning process, and (c) the curriculum.

Developmental Model

Waldorf School is characterized as a developmental model of schooling. The child is seen to develop in age-based stages. Society, too, is conceived in terms of historical "ages", with some cultures held to be more advanced than others. A symbolism of rounded, organic forms, and a strong notion of completeness, aestheticism and integrity also informs teachers' work, as seen in the following analysis.

Organization

The structure of the school day is integrated. Each day is seen as having a "rhythm". The day begins with an opening ritual[10] involving the lighting of a candle and students reciting a verse about nature, followed by a two hour main lesson, then cycling through related and integrated areas of study. Activities of the school day, whether lunch

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[10] See Hansen, 1989, for a comparison of opening rituals in public, Catholic and private schools.

time or a lesson, have a completeness of their own, as well as contributing to the overall rhythm of the day. Transitions from one activity to another are signalled by such routines as children saying poems and verses at various points throughout the daily cycle. Thus, a poem which begins "a faithful friend is a strong defence" is said by students as they pack up from "main lesson" and prepare for "snack," which has its own ritualized form. Unity is achieved through the repetition and harmony that underpins the school day.

Teachers also describe their social relationships as holistic: "working in a circle." There is no hierarchy and virtually no division of labor in the school. Teachers and parents and board members act cooperatively. Parents take on administrative roles, and one sometimes finds those administrators acting as teachers; in turn teachers take on administrative roles. What works to keep people involved seems to be the guiding principle of school organization. Authority is a collective phenomenon. However, children are clearly distinguished from adults, and are not given a great deal of responsibility. Children are "children", a class set apart from the adult world, to be protected by wise elders. Indeed, the school has a fairy tale quality about it that teachers consciously create: the "magic of childhood" (Armstrong 1988) is a frequently used phrase. Thus, authority in teacher-student relations is not based on the idea of vertical hierarchy, but rather is connected with a horizontal or developmental concept. The school's reverent view toward childhood and a desire to protect childhood innocence underpins the teacher-run structure of social relations.

Also significant for social relations is the bounded nature of the community itself. When parents are teachers, administrators, board members, as well as each other's close friends, the community becomes highly personal. Personal ties develop between teacher and student, made all the more intense by the practice of one teacher staying with her class for the eight year duration of grade school. When eighth graders continue on to high school the teacher takes on a new cohort of first graders and begins the eight year cycle again. Kindergarten and nursery teachers are the only teachers who have a new class of children each year. Specialty teachers in German, handwork and eurythmy provide some variety, but even they are part of the school-community, and well known on a personal level to the children. The concept of "community" at Waldorf School is conceived in terms of cyclic, holistic and personal interconnections.

The school buildings themselves are arranged in a circle, like tribal huts. This may be in part serendipity, for the school is temporarily located in rented buildings, but plans for the ideal school also show a circular or octagonal form. Teachers then round off the corners of classrooms with soft muslin cloth to make them more "womb-like" in

the younger grades (nursery-grade 3). In addition, colors are used to enhance a feeling of connectedness:

> The peach color is supposed to be warm and womb-like. That's the reason for it. When I was teaching I didn't want it to be too pink and so I added brown and people warned me against going too brown. The peachy-pink is chosen to be the right color for this age group (Interview, teacher).

Watercolors in pastel shades, crayons, beeswax, indeed only all natural materials are used in the school. The intent is to provide for a schooling experience based on "integrity" (Interview, teacher).

Nature as a central metaphor is consistent with the emphasis on cycles and unity. Where possible, lessons are conducted outdoors, and using natural materials. For instance, in a geometry lesson the children make a compass from a stick and some string. In the sand they draw circles, bisect lines and engage in other related activities. Teachers also create a "nature garden" in each of the classrooms. The "nature garden" is an altar-like table covered with a white linen cloth and an abundance of nature, including grasses, flowers, nuts, cords of wood, wool and cotton. Daily rituals focus attention on the Nature Garden. Each day first to fourth graders stand and face the Nature Garden, lighting a candle and reciting:

The Sun, with loving light
Makes bright for me the day
The soul, with spirit power
Gives strength unto my limbs.
In sunlight shining clear
I reverence, O God,
The strength of human kind
Which Thou as gift of love
Hast planted in my soul
That I may love to work
And ever seek to learn
From Thee stream strength and light;
To Thee rise love and thanks.

Older children say verses that similarly celebrate nature and human spirituality, to be found in and through nature, for example.

I do behold the world
The sun, the stars, the stone
The plants that feel and live
And man to spirit gives
A dwelling in his soul.

Thus, a foundation for the school's organization is a commitment to a moral vision of humankind as "connected with the spirit world, the cosmos" (Interview, teacher). Waldorf School teachers claim that their type of schooling is concerned about "nourishing the soul". Teachers at this school see character development and morals as equally or more important than skills and intellectual development. "Humanity is taught to reach out to the spiritual world and the spiritual world is also able to reach down to us from the cosmos" (Interview, teacher).

Pedagogy

In the Waldorf model of teaching and learning children are seen as unfolding according to an organic, cyclic and almost predestined plan. It is the child's body that indicates, through the loss of baby teeth around age eight, when it is time to read. The school's belief is in a rhythm and developmental sequence to the child's growth. The "willing" stage (0-7 years) is followed by the "feeling" stage (7-14 years) and then the "thinking" stage (14-21 years). The stages are not hierarchical, but rather, like concentric circles, inclusive and integrative. Initial capacities are built upon. Thus, the educated adult is seen as able to synthesize intellectual and spiritual dimensions of human experience. The teacher is an educational and spiritual guide assisting in the child's development. Children's interests - "the magic of childhood" - are considered important, and yet it is the teachers, the wise elders, who construct the childhood experience. Holism is central to the process. Through ritual, music and other aesthetic experiences, and a focus on nature, the child is nurtured in order to grow intellectually and spiritually. The ultimate goal is unity with the "Spirit of the Universe", a goal that is attributed to Rudolf Steiner's vision.

Unity is also sought through the integration and matching of school and home experiences. Faculty and students are embedded in a tightly-coupled school-community. Remuneration for faculty is low, and the level of dedication required is very high. Faculty socialize with parents; they are expected to work long hours; they take each child's education as a personal goal, staying with the child for the eight year duration of grade school. Parents tend to supplement teachers' salaries with goods and services that they provide for them, but this by no means compensates for the minimal salaries teachers receive. Waldorf School faculty exemplify the notion of teaching as a mission or calling.

Faculty are employed not on the basis of teaching qualifications (although this is not unimportant), but taking into account their affiliation with, and knowledge of, Waldorf education and the principles of Rudolf Steiner. Waldorf trained teachers are

preferred. Three teacher-training facilities are in this country, two in California and one in New York. Two of the six teachers were, however, trained at a Waldorf institute in Britain. Preservice Waldorf training is desired, and also occurs on an ongoing basis, whereby new teachers are socialized by experienced Waldorf teachers. A situation of value-homogenous faculty and committed families facilitates this process. Appeals to conformity are personalistic: those who demonstrate moral purity, as defined by the school, gain membership to the community.

Curriculum

The curriculum is largely an oral curriculum and constantly evolving. Teachers refer to it as "developmentally grounded and open to being changed." Most teachers do not document their curriculum: units of study evolve as they are in progress. Teachers seem to believe that to write down and carefully plan the curriculum would be to take away from its vigor. A one page curriculum outline (nursery-grade 6) has been prepared by teachers indicating broad areas of study and how they interrelate, but each teacher then exercises freedom in the development of his/her curriculum.

> You won't really find the curriculum printed anywhere. There's one book (on curriculum) with Steiner's quotes but it's very difficult to read. And the one page outline that we have is pretty much what we teach. It's really up to the teacher to study and do the inner work and to bring it from that inner work ... The study and the understanding that man is a spiritual being and what this means and the stages that we go through in life is what it's all about ... But we don't have clear materials laying it all out (Interview, teacher).

Teachers also try to integrate all subjects. For example, language skills such as reading, writing and recitation, and art are woven throughout the curriculum.

Teachers hold certain expectations and beliefs about schooling. They have read Rudolf Steiner's many treatises on school, society and child development. Waldorf teacher training has also sought to develop the "soul" of teachers, to prepare them well for working with youngsters. Preservice teachers engage in pottery making, drawing and study groups with an aim to come away with a sense of autonomy and purpose. After all, state requirements and test scores do not figure in the Waldorf teacher's view of education. Instead, a commitment to certain principles is upheld: anti-materialism, the beauty and goodness of art, strength in unity, working in a circle, the magic of childhood, and so on. Teachers constantly read Waldorf books, participate in study groups and continue to remake and renew their collective commitment to Steiner's moral vision for schooling.

Cooperative, group norms are thus part of a belief in the idea of humans as spiritual beings, located in nature, but also able to overcome base desires, particularly materialism and greed. The school adopts a natural living ethos which has some parallels with the environmental movement. Also, the notion of "the quest" is embraced. Members of this community don't just drop out of society; they aim to study and think, and live a purer life than they believe others achieve in a modern, materialistic society.

"Religion" in this school is clearly part of the curriculum, with an attendant "Christian" bias. Steiner is attributed with emphasizing the importance of the "Christ Event" on the evolution of humanity, therefore Christmas, Easter, St John's and Michaelmas festivals are celebrated in the school. However, Jews, Christians, non-believers, and even a Sufi, make up the school population, and their traditions are also recognized. The advent wreath, for example, is lit along with the menora at an end of year ritual called the "Festival of Lights." Religion is instead about people coming together with common concerns that cut across denominational lines. People in the school also do not consider themselves un-American or unpatriotic, but neither does one find an American flag in the school. Their concerns and principles are not bound by nationality.

However, the school does have a Eurocentric bias. The clientele is disproportionately European-American - German, Swiss, British. And the curriculum focuses on European cultural literacy. For instance, the language curriculum includes fables, saint legends, greek myths, medieval literature, Arthurian legends and Shakespeare. Noticably absent are African stories. And, as one perceptive critic noted: What do all those pastel colors in the school do for the notion of blackness? When pale is the color of choice, "black is beautiful" symbolism is no longer heard. In this school the one black child was frequently "acting out," considered notorious for his attention seeking behavior. Interestingly, the school is not structured to celebrate diversity. It is white middle - upper-middle class kids who are engaging in this school alternative with a New Age vision.

Academic Elite Model

College Prep's model of schooling is an academic elite model. Everyone in the school is considered gifted. Given the self-selection process that occurs in the school, for fees are involved, strict admissions procedures are in place, and students with academic problems are referred to other private schools in town, this is not unrealistic. "Mass gifted education" is a vertical concept with a social class conception of society and the acceptance of such distinctions as thinkers versus doers, managers versus workers,

theory versus practice. Schooling is academic, quite abstract, disciplined and structured.

Organization

The school day at College Prep is organized in a linear form: eight forty minute periods. A typical day begins with opening exercises consisting of formal greetings, followed by a class recitation of the pledge of allegiance to the United States of America (right hand over left breast), the Lord's Prayer, and the singing of America the Beautiful. After these symbolic acts, the teacher proceeds with business-like efficiency to mark attendance, make announcements and carry out other administrative tasks. These tasks are important too, since the children do not return to the "homeroom," but rather attend specialized classes run by specialized faculty for the entire school day. Modern day role specialization, with its attendant values, is clearly endorsed at this school. Conventional U.S. values, in the WASP tradition, are also validated. Christianity at College Prep means an Episcopal-style Christianity, despite the school's non-sectarian claims, as opposed to Waldorf School's naturalistic and more mystical form of religion.

The school's organization is also hierarchical. Lines of authority stem down from the school's board of trustees to the headmaster. As a doctor of divinity, the headmaster symbolizes religious authority, a carryover from former days when the school was an Episcopal boarding school. Next in line is the Assistant Headmaster, then the directors of the three schools: upper, middle and lower schools, supported by a Director of Services (essentially a curriculum advisor), the Director of Administrative Services, the Assistant Director of Administrative Services, and the Director of Athletics. Under their authority are the Senior Masters or department heads, who in turn supervise regular teachers. The ideal of "community" at College Prep is thus seen in terms of role-based relations. This is not to say that personal networks, ties and connections are not there. The "old school tie" network is important in this school. However, the functioning of the school depends on the various people who make up the ecology of the school knowing their specialized roles and how this contributes to the overall school hierarchy.

Specialized professional roles can also be seen in the faculty division of labor. Specialists teach the various core subjects, classics for prep schools: Reading, Language, Mathematics, Social Studies, Science, and supplementary courses: P.E., Music, Art, Drama, Computer, Library, French (Latin is required from seventh grade). Children rotate between the subject specialists in the manner of high school students. Work is divided, in the interests of offering a higher level of faculty expertise for

students than a single classroom teacher could provide. Homeroom teachers are assigned, but their task is mainly to administer, not to perform educational functions. The aim is to maximise efficiency and provide for optimum conditions for learning, with an ultimate goal of "preparing graduates for the nation's finest colleges and universities" (Interview, Director of Lower School).

College Prep's physical structure is also predominantly linear in form. The school is located on two campuses totaling more than sixty acres. The $7.5 million plant and $1.5 million in endowments, which represent wealth and prestige, are clearly reflected in the high quality facilities. A tree lined avenue leads up to the school, which is located in an area also populated by exclusive country clubs and old Southern mansions. The buildings are of brick construction, designed in what Robert Sommer (1974) refers to as "hard" architecture, i.e., linear and angular features. Right angles and straight lines are the key elements of the design, in contrast to Waldorf School's preference for a circular form.

The school was founded in 1910. Hence, its history, combined with the traditions of elite college prep schools, serves to build an authority base. The means of social control at College Prep has been handed down over the centuries, stemming from a British boarding school tradition. The essence is tradition, "the way we have always done things at College Prep." This is further reinforced by religious authority, for the school sets out to "nurture students in the spiritual dimension of life." The school also views itself in relation to other schools, particularly college prep schools, in terms of a hierarchy of privilege. All private college prep schools are considered to be in a class above other schools. In addition, from within there is also a hierarchy, based on such factors as "grade point average, SAT scores, endowments, number of acres, etc." (Interview, parent). And, in the local hierarchy of schools College Prep clearly sees itself as superior to the others: "We're the IBM of schools" (Interview, headmaster).

Pedagogy

Teachers at College Prep are expected to inspire students in their particular areas of specialization. Knowledge is seen as able to be divided into subject areas, and student competence is assessed in those areas through quantifiable tests. Test results sometimes include qualitative dimensions, but the impetus is not for an holistic view of the child. Rather, the child's progressive scores, presumed to be unilinear, and largely an accurate indicator of achievement, are sought.

Teachers are also committed to instilling in students the discipline necessary for academic excellence. Thus, standardized rules and sanctions, such as demerits, are

applied. Students are disciplined in an "old school tie" manner, according to the ideal that eventually extrinsic motivation will become intrinsic, i.e., "we at college Prep create an environment where honorable behavior is desired and expected and sometimes we have to push them toward self discovery so that a sense of *honor* will develop from within" (Interview, teacher). The aim is to create a challenging atmosphere where students gain the skills necessary for both creative and disciplined thought. The emphasis is on critical thinking skills and the ability to think rationally. Teachers do not wait until children are 14 years of age (as they do at Waldorf School) before children are challenged to think in an abstract and depersonalized way. Reflective and critical thinking, and an ability to work independently, are seen as part of an intellectual orientation. Logical, rational thought is promoted through the various disciplines.

The faculty at College Prep are committed to academics and the prep school cause. They were hired for their academic degrees and academic standing. They consider the students "better" than the average, and are prepared to accept remuneration below that of public school teachers, in order to have a favorable working environment. Other benefits not included in salary, such as reduced tuition for faculty kids, provide an incentive. Moreover, teachers have to perform to retain their positions. Consistent with the school's competitive structure, faculty are hired on a ten month contract and must compete favorably with other faculty, delivering high test scores for their students, in order to gain a renewed contract. Teachers are expected to participate fully in the school, to support its cultural, sporting and religious life, as well as commanding high academic standards. The dedication required is considerable:

> Although faculty members are selected without regard to their personal beliefs, College Prep does stand in the Judeo-Christian tradition, and all faculty members are expected to attend the chapel services held in their respective divisions (Faculty handbook, 1989-90).

College Prep traditions, in particular chapel, the Honor Code, athletics and the "old school tie" network are expected to be supported by faculty. But teachers are professionals first, and members of the College Prep community second. This is in contradistinction to Waldorf School's more particularistic fit between faculty, school and community.

Curriculum

The curriculum at College Prep is traditional, highly academic and written, as opposed to Waldorf School's oral curriculum. It rests on the principle of competition,

and values formal, standardized test scores as the primary means of evaluation. Distinct disciplines, e.g., Math, Science, English, with a well-defined body of knowledge and skills for each grade level, and varying ability levels within grades, make up a hierarchy of knowledge. At the top is more theoretical, abstract knowledge; practical knowledge is considered suitable for the less able. The curriculum specialist (Director of Studies) has the task of meeting with teachers at each grade level and department to ensure that continuity is achieved from kindergarten through grade 12. Learning is viewed as a cumulative sequence, and reliant on controlled exposure to "great books" and cultural knowledge that has been acquired over the centuries.

The model employed is one of the *transmission* of knowledge, rather than the production or creation of knowledge:

> We at College Prep believe that the transmission of knowledge, encouragement of curiosity, and the development of responsible, honorable behavior are the great ends of education (Interview, teacher).

Students are required to learn a specific body of knowledge considered necessary to "master the academic world." Standardized texts used throughout the school, e.g., Open Court's *Real Math*, Coronado's *Your English* and Merrill's *Human Heritage* and Macmillan's *Science for the Elementary School*, reinforce the idea of solid, dependable knowledge, and ensure consistency throughout the grades. Teachers generally follow the texts and the written curriculum with only minimal variation. The need for high test scores and teachers own non-tenured positions are motives for "covering ground" to assume central importance. At the same time, two additional components of the curriculum are also important: first, service through chapel and volunteer programs, and second, athletics (lacrosse, tennis, football, soccer, basketball and wrestling). Thus, the values of independence and competition, the basis of academics and athletics, are tempered by a social concern. Yet service in this school means primarily philanthropy, not moves for change, or promoting empowerment of the masses.

Religion, too, is a central part of the curriculum. Attendance at chapel is required of all students, and in the Upper School one year of religion (Old and New Testament) is required for graduation. In chapel, students receive direct guidance about ethics and morals. The liturgy is structured in the manner of traditional Episcopal services:

1. Candles on the altar are lit
2. Invocation: Call to worship
3. Prayer: Lord's Prayer
4. Hymn or song
5. Homily: Includes Readings from Old and New Testament

4. Hymn or song
3. Prayer: Birthday Blessing
2. Benediction: Closing prayer
1. Candles on the altar are extinguished

The degree of structure, its repetitive and unchanging pattern, is noteworthy. Students are learning about tradition, specifically the Judeo-Christian tradition. The values of intellectual inquiry (note the emphasis on the facts of thanksgiving in the chapel service described earlier), professional roles, and membership to an elite community are supported. Students dress well for chapel, and are taught to display appropriate manners and demeanor. "Success" may be defined primarily in intellectual/academic terms, but this is to be coupled with successful personal and spiritual lives. It should also be noted that the clientele of the school is largely white (8% minority) and overwhelmingly the children of professional families. They are also children with few academic problems. The curriculum focuses on excellence and success through competition, but a competition where everyone in the school is being prepared for college and future leadership positions.

Conclusions

School organization, pedagogy and curriculum, amongst other areas of school life, are steeped in ideas and values that together form a symbolic order, embodying quite different conceptions of the world, relations to others, and the individual. Waldorf School's symbolism about *the world* sends a message of democratic, equalitarian values in an organic, interdependent world: knowledge is taught in wholes not parts, and through storytelling not abstractions. College Prep's symbolism conveys instead the school's belief in progress, and an hierarchic conception of the world. Its school day is divided, with a strong emphasis on academic and rational modes of thinking and acting. The rhythms of the school day and the curriculum also vary from a cyclical mode at Waldorf School, to a divided mode at College Prep. *Relations to others* at Waldorf School are personalized, stressing equality, and at College Prep social relations are more formal. Differences can also be seen in the schools' *perception of the individual.* Waldorf School views the individual as passing through three seven-year periods of development, an organic and almost predetermined evolution, and College Prep holds that the individual's development is able to be accelerated and perfected through a variety of tests and challenges. In one context, the school's value-laden symbolic order is organic and aesthetic in form; in the other context, it is academic, instrumental and rational.

Both schools, however, share a concern for spiritual growth. They acknowledge that humans have a spiritual nature and attempt to transcend the purely physical. As an example, Waldorf School's and College Prep's opening exercises are deliberate attempts to shape moral character, and provide for the development of values.

So how does looking inside these two schools contribute toward our understanding of schools? First, the study serves as a stimulus for rethinking schooling. Criticism of schools frequently focuses on alleged fragmentation, alienation and isolation. This study provides tangible examples of schools that have a coherent symbolic order, a strong web of meaning shared by all involved with the schools. Both schools have a clear idea of education and the educated child, although they pursue their goals in different ways.

Reform proposals have already begun to encourage the growth of diversity in public schools, (e.g., Grant 1988), schools known as magnet or alternative public schools. There are now thousands of these public school alternatives in the U.S. (Barth 1980: 18). They differentiate themselves according to public demand in a free enterprise manner: an arty school in community X, a technical school in Y, an academic school in Z. This study of independent schools illustrates schooling based on a shared philosophy and symbolic order, one that is distinctly different to public schools in its origins and messages.

College Prep's British origins and emphasis on English upper class "habitus"[11] has found a receptive niche in an American context. At College Prep academics and technical-rational values are combined with an emphasis on philanthropy. Waldorf School, on the other hand, with German origins and international appeal, offers an alternative to the "age of the machine" so readily embraced in U.S. culture. Schools are shown responding to a rapidly changing modern world in different ways. Waldorf School advocates less materialism and a return to nature, an alternative to the prevailing culture; College Prep promotes an elite group within an hierarchical social structure, and more science and technology, although tempered by a social concern. The study also draws attention to the costs and benefits of distinctive school types. Indeed, many of the arguments surrounding the controversy over tracking students (e.g., Oakes 1985) also applies to these schools. The question is whether schools ought to be pluralistic from within, and essentially the same across the country, or differentiated according to demand and local conditions.[12]

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[11] See Bourdieu & Passeron on the "habitus" concept.

[12] Even in public schools there is no guarantee of pluralism or equality. Under the present arrangement of public school attendance being determined by geography, families who can afford to live in expensive neighborhoods send their children to the

Second, for those interested in types of schools, an ethnology of schooling, the study shows some of the variety of school cultures. Other studies in this vein include Page's (1990) study of three middle class "college preparatory" public high schools, Peshkin's (1986) study of a Baptist fundamentalist school, McLaren's (1986) and Lesko's (1988) studies of Catholic high schools, and Cookson and Persell's (1985) study of elite college-preparatory boarding schools.[13]

Third, the simple dichotomy between traditional or progressive education is shown to be far too simplistic. This supports Philip Jackson's (1986: 101) position in *The Practice of Teaching*. College Prep, a traditional and conservative school, also has some liberal or progressive overtones, and Waldorf School, an essentially progressive school, contains much that is representative of the traditional school of thought. For instance, the authority of the teacher is central at Waldorf School, which contrasts with the school's insistence on "working in a circle." Two varieties of schooling, and the complexity of their moral foundations are made apparent. Both schools seek to provide an answer to our social and educational ills, College Prep by emphasizing competition and excellence, Waldorf School by taking a romantic, progressive, and separationist approach in an increasingly de-humanized world. Dimensions yet to be developed may be more helpful than the "traditional" versus "progressive" concepts.

Fourth, the study highlights the importance of symbols in schools. Students lives are keenly affected by the values, ideas, beliefs and attitudes of those around them. Private schools experience less internal disagreement over what symbols are appropriate, for parents and teachers self-select a school that complements their own value system. Private schools are also not compelled to admit or retain any student. Counter cultural elements are thus minimal. However, this raises the issue of private schools exerting a strong control over students' lives, coming close to Goffman's (1961) "total institution" concept. Ironically, Waldorf School argues that it prepares students to "respond in powerful and positive ways to whatever challenges to freedom and demands for conformity are placed on them" (Handbook, 1989-90), and yet conformity to the school's social order is almost total. Ought private schools be free to set their own agenda in this regard? And, what of private schools' relationship to the state? Would it be acceptable to found a school on radically anti-state principles, for instance? David

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local public school, and ghetto schools are largely populated by ghetto children (Kane 1991: 397).

[13] Also see the special section in *Teachers College Record* (Spring, 1991: 397) devoted to "convey the "culture" of independent schools and to delineate some of the issues of current importance in independent education".

Lisman's (1990) argument is salient on this point. He suggests that there is a need to be socialized, for the alternative is anarchy, and yet, at the same time, people ought to be free to criticize the dominant order, otherwise the system is merely founded on dogma.

Finally, studies of school alternatives can serve to stimulate thought about the mission of public schools. College Prep and Waldorf School work for their communities, but they are insulated communities, one elitist in its principles, the other romantic and alienated from the larger society. The concept of community for public schools could mean a division of labor, as seen in the *public schools of choice* movement, or they could focus their attention on a symbolic order committed to principles of equal opportunity, diversity and plurality. While these terms may already be the expressed foundations of the public school movement, deciding on priorities and translating them into a lively cause is likely to be more challenging.

These considerations cannot be answered by this study. And yet the examples provided and the exploratory analysis is intended to contribute toward ongoing theory building in the areas of school socialization and the character of schooling. Further research is needed on the types of schooling that exist and their symbolic orders. Schools themselves may put out glossy brochures and advertise a philosophy, but these surface representations frequently only serve to obscure their hidden agendas that have powerful educational and social effects.

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